



Lewiston Initiates Community Investment with Bates Mill Redevelopment

Lewiston, Maine

In Lewiston, Maine, redevelopment of a former mill site has transformed a vital section of the city's neglected downtown area into a multi-use business park where history has been preserved and investment stimulated. The city has leveraged nearly \$40 million for cleanup and redevelopment of the site, where initial reuse has already created more than 1,200 jobs and \$500,000 in annual property taxes.

The Bates Mill was once the largest employer in Maine, with activity dating back to the mid-1850s. The enormous textile mill encompassed 11 buildings totaling approximately 1.2 million square feet on a 10-acre parcel. The site served as both the geographic and cultural center of downtown Lewiston, as most of its workers lived and shopped within walking distance of the mill. As the once-booming textile industry declined in the northeast, investment left the area. The area's poverty rates eventually rose to nearly 50 percent and unemployment rates to 16 percent. After 30 years of steady decline, the city acquired the abandoned mill site in 1992.

The Lewiston Mill Redevelopment Corporation is a public-private partnership that was created to determine the best ways to bring investment back to the area. The group began by creating a city-wide strategic plan with the help of a variety of stakeholders, including economic development officials, developers, and the local chamber of commerce. The city's vision and goals were finalized in 1997, and have provided direction for all planning.

A Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilot grant awarded by EPA in 1998 funded detailed assessments of the Bates Mill site, revealing metals, PCBs, volatile organic compounds, and mixed petroleum products. A portion of the site was found to have high-enough contamination levels to warrant a \$386,770 cleanup through EPA's Emergency Response and Removal program. EPA awarded an additional \$300,000 to Lewiston for further assessment at the Bates Mill site and nearby properties; EPA also awarded Lewiston a \$500,000 Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund (BCRLF) Pilot in 2000. The BCRLF Pilot's first loan, issued in March 2003, was a \$150,000 loan to the Lewiston Mills Redevelopment Corporation that will be used for further mill cleanup.

EPA's nearly \$1.4 million investment in the site has spurred interest from a variety of other federal, local, and private stakeholders and has resulted



Demolition underway on the Bates Mill site

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Lewiston's Bates Mill

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in additional funding for the project, including: more than \$5.6 million from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; \$1.8 million from the Economic Development Administration; \$200,000 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture; and \$17 million in private investment. Lewiston's local government contributed \$13.6 million which includes reallocated money from the sale of three mill buildings. In total, the City of Lewiston has leveraged nearly \$40 million to clean up and redevelop the historic Bates Mill Site.

The majority of the Bates Mill site is ready for reuse, providing prime office and light industrial space. The interiors and exteriors of the buildings preserve the historical setting with large windows, exposed beams, and brick exteriors. One of the mill buildings was redeveloped into a parking lot, and another was redeveloped into a small park that offers an outdoor gathering space in the center of the complex.

A variety of businesses have already occupied space at the new business park, providing 1,200 jobs for local residents. Tenants include large corporate offices like BankNorth-Peoples Heritage Bank Operations Center and LiveBridge telecommunications, service oriented non-profits such as the Abused Women's Advocacy Project, education centers like the Creative Photographic Arts Center, small offices, retail spaces, and a restaurant. A strong marketing campaign has been initiated to target financial, insurance, high-tech, and light manufacturing companies for siting at the business park.

Future plans for the Bates Mill site include expanding arts and entertainment venues along the adjacent canal, and increasing greenspace by creating pedestrian paths to the nearby Androscoggin River and local Railroad Park. The Railroad Park site was addressed by a \$75,000 EPA Targeted Brownfields Assessment grant in 1999 that led to its cleanup and redevelopment into recreational space. As more tenants locate within the complex, additional amenities will be added such as a food court, dry cleaner, day-care, and health center. While the largest of the mill buildings (300,000 square feet) remains vacant, redevelopment into a convention center is planned.

Redevelopment of the Bates Mill site has initiated revitalization throughout the community. Adjacent Lisbon Street, which once served as Lewiston's main shopping area but also suffered through economic decline, has begun to follow a similar multi-use redevelopment plan. The initial stages of cleanup have begun at other local brownfield sites where there are a variety of planned reuses, including residences, parking, and greenspace. The City of Lewiston realized that to bring investment to the area it had to create unique office space and a community setting worth relocating to. Through its strategic planning process, Lewiston exemplifies how smart planning can alter a city's image, increase investment and jobs, preserve history, and protect the environment.

CONTACTS:

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Visit the EPA Brownfields web site at:

<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>



*A view of the redeveloped
Bates Mill plaza*



*A view of the redeveloped
Bates Mill complex*